

# Information consolidation

**Jeffrey Simmons**

Wytheville Enterprise: News >  
Fri May 30, 2008 - 02:46 PM

By NATE HUBBARD/Staff

HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Existence) Inc. unveiled its HOPE Community Information System during an open house Thursday morning.

Members of the organization, which started using HCIS in November 2007, highlighted the system's user-friendly features that allow administrators to easily access client information.

"It streamlines our ability to report to anybody about anything," said Andy Kegley, HOPE's executive director.

In the approximately seven months HOPE has been using the system, Kegley said information has been entered for 897 clients.

As is standard practice by human services organizations, HOPE takes down a variety of demographic information from people seeking its services, which include financial assistance for needs such as rent and utilities and help with disability and other government applications.

With the community information system, HOPE and other participating groups can access consenting clients' information put in by other agencies, which eliminates the redundancy of entering in the same name, date of birth, social security number or address needed by each entity.

"This makes it easier where we capture their demographics one time," Kegley said. HOPE received a \$12,000 Wythe-Bland Community Foundation grant and funds through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to implement the system in the area.

Other agencies using the system include Crossroads Shelter, Mountain Community Action Program and Brock Hughes Free Clinic.

But Kegley said that the more groups that get involved, the more useful the system will become.

"We thought it would be a good idea to broaden it," he said to the representatives attending the open house.

Other groups Kegley said he hopes will sign on include churches and Wythe County's Department of Social Services.

Amanda Romans, HOPE's housing counselor and HCIS coordinator, gave a demonstration of the inner workings of the system Thursday, showing how information can be entered and then referred to other organizations.

Romans also demonstrated a feature of HCIS that gives detailed information on exactly what services the various agencies across the state can provide so clients can be referred to the appropriate sources.

Also during Thursday's open house, Jim Coen, representing the Virginia Workforce Network, shared how HOPE has become an access point for job-seekers looking to use the network's services who may not be able to get to one of the network's one-stop centers. HOPE also began offering assistance to clients looking to use the job search program late last year.

"We're always looking for ways to kind of reach out into the community," Coen said. "Now, HOPE center is in effect an arm of the Virginia Workforce Network."

The network can be accessed online at any personal computer, but HOPE's employees received special training to assist clients in navigating through the program.

HOPE also provides a public access computer that clients can use to get started in their job search.

"It's a pretty powerful system," Coen said. "It's a powerful search tool."

Nate Hubbard can be reached at 228-6611 or [nhubbard@wythenews.com](mailto:nhubbard@wythenews.com).